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Inaugural Thesis

on Pap'd March 13<sup>rd</sup> 1827  
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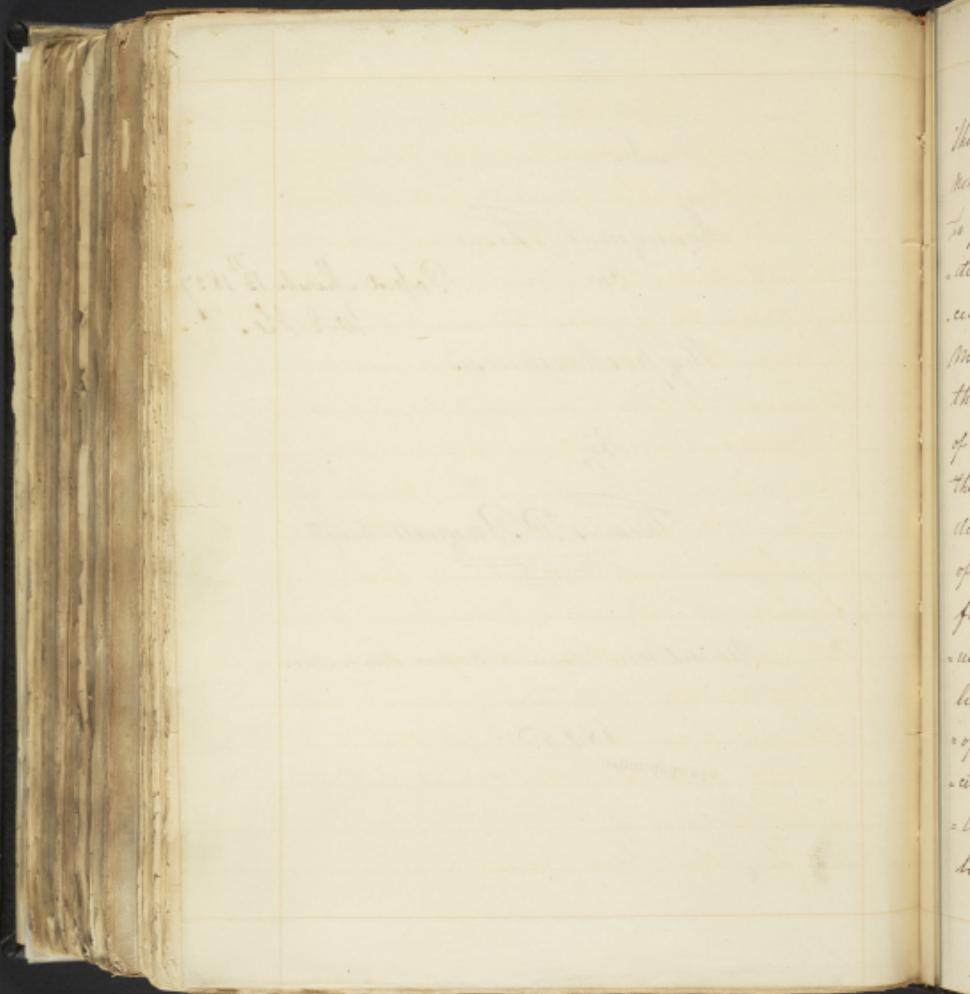
Hypochondriasis

By

Thomas P Bagwell Mdg<sup>o</sup>

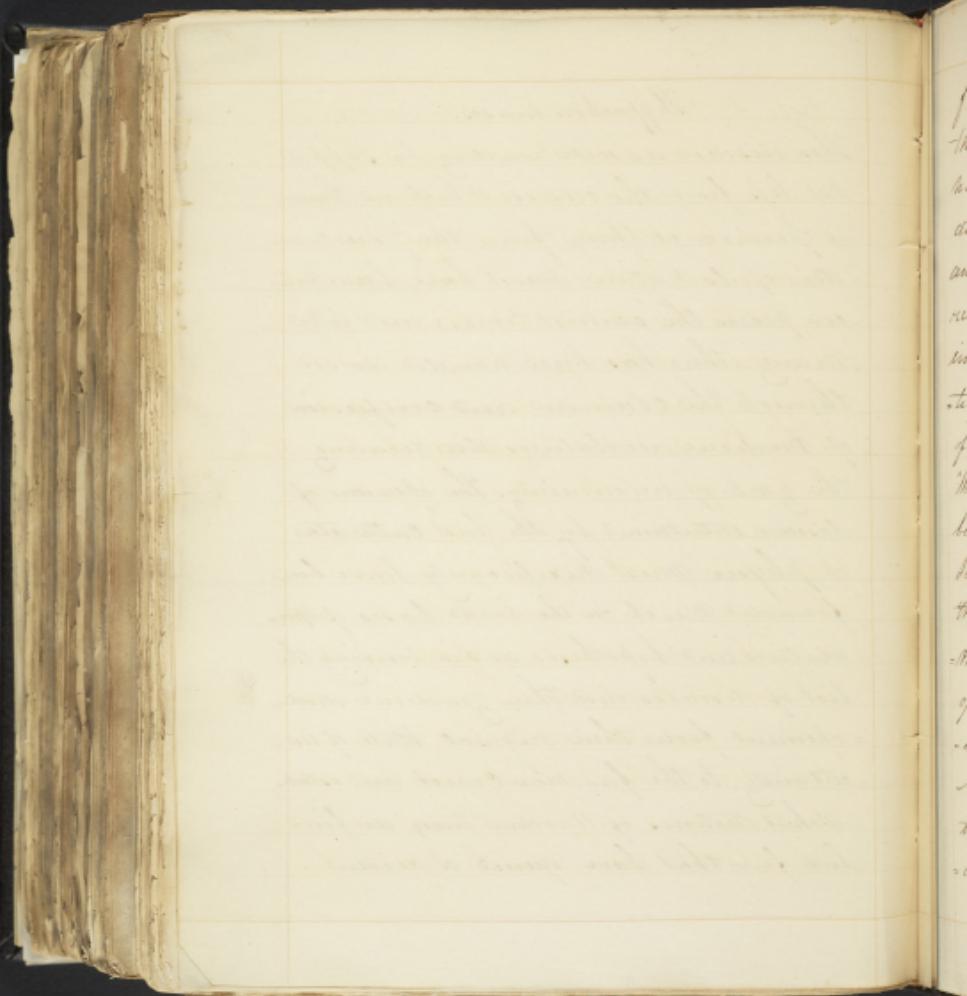
— Ut sit Mens Sana in Corpore Sano. Hor.

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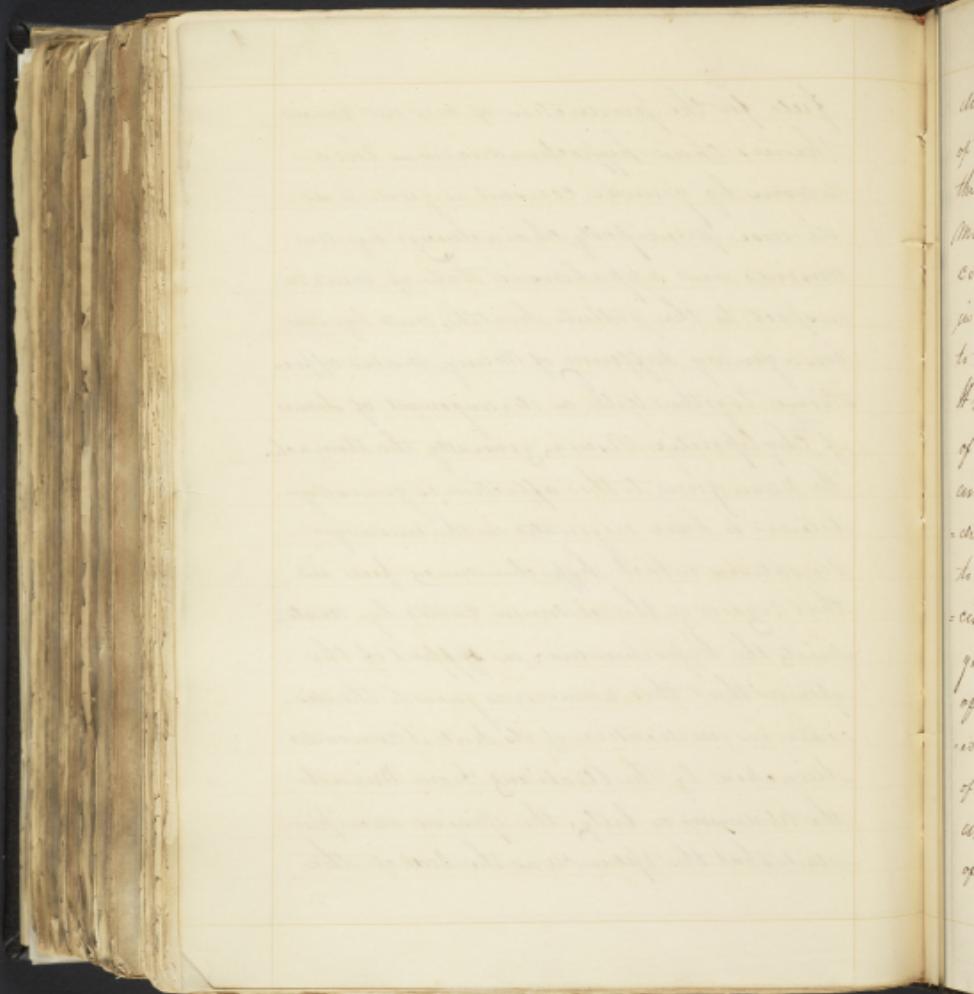


### Hypocondriasis.

This disease as will readily be supposed not less from the causes which we know to produce it, than from the peculiari-  
ties of its nature, must have been noted  
from the earliest times; and like  
many others has been handed down  
through the clamour and conjecture  
of medical writers still retaining  
the gait of uncertainty. The opinions of  
diseases entertained by the first cultivators  
of physic must necessarily have been  
founded much on the broad basis of spec-  
ulation and hypothesis, and in viewing the  
list of diseases, and their gradual devel-  
opment from their original state of un-  
certainty, to the few more correct and estab-  
lished notions of modern times, we find  
but few that have opened a wider

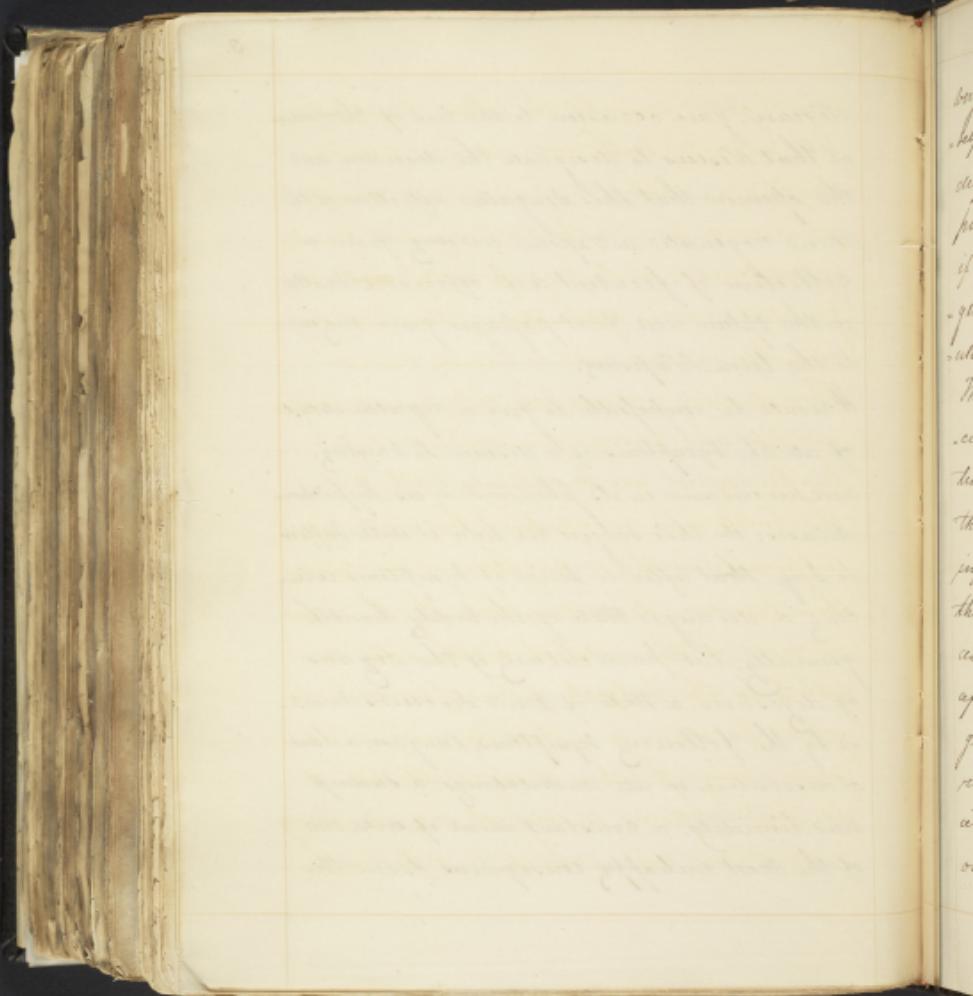


field for the production of new and various theories than hypochondriasis.— This name by general consent is given to a disease principally characterized by an anxious and apprehensive state of mind in respect to the patient's health, and by an imaginary suffering of many morbid affections, together with a disengagement of some of the Chylomicric Viscera, generally the Stomach. The name given to this affection is generally believed to have originated in the uneasy sensations which hypochondriacs feel in that region of the abdomen called by anatomists the hypochondria; in support of the opinion that this name was given to the disease as indicative of its seat, it was called Melancholia by the Arabians from Melach the abdomen or belly; the opinion once prevalent that the spleen was the seat of the



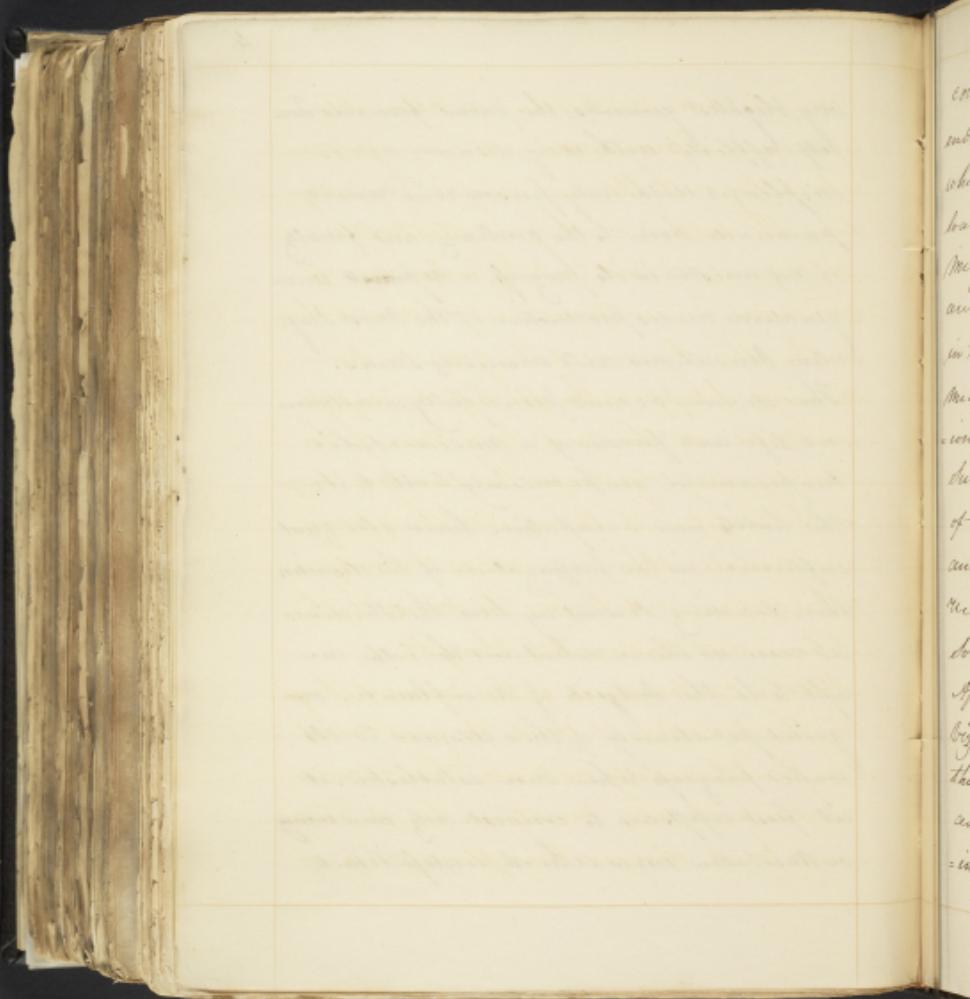
disease, gave occasion to the use of the name  
of that disease to designate the disorder, and  
the opinion that this singular affection of the  
Mind originated in Vapours arising from a  
collection of feculent and offensive Matter  
in the Spleen and first passages gave origin  
to the term Vapours.

It would be impossible to give a regular detail  
of all the symptoms of a disease so varying  
and uncertain in its phenomena as hypocondriasis; on this subject we hope it will suffice  
to say, that after a series of symptoms indicating a deranged state of the bodily health  
generally, but particularly of the organs  
of digestion, a state of Mind succeeds mark-  
ed by the following symptoms, languor, a want  
of resolution in all undertakings, a sadness  
and timidity, a constant sense of vice, one  
of the most unhappy consequences from the



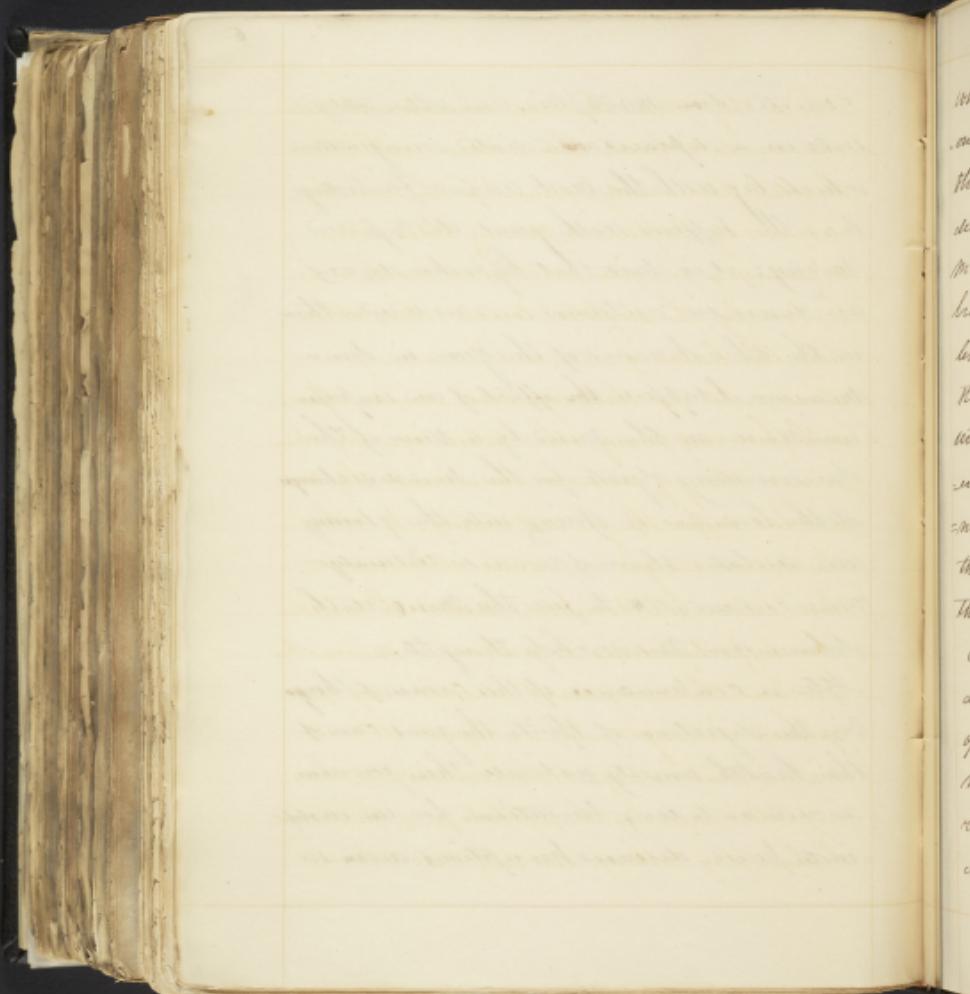
very slightest grounds; the patient fancies him-  
self afflicted with very disorder, and is  
displeased with any person who would  
persuade him to the contrary; and finally  
if not arrested with progress, a ~~depraved~~ ima-  
gination arises productive of the most sing-  
ular sensations and erroneous ideas.

This disease occurs principally in accom-  
moded life and persons of a melancholic  
temperament are peculiarly liable to it;  
the habits and occupation have also great  
influence in the propagation of the disorder;  
those leading sedentary lives, the studious  
as well as the indolent and the idle are  
apt to be the subjects of its influence; one  
great peculiarity of this disease, is its  
rapid progress when once established, it  
at first appears to consist only in a wrong  
or mistaken idea which unless timely



connected soon multiplies, and ultimately ends in a depraved & vitiated imagination which beg with the most unfair forebodings load the sufferer with great distress and misery; it is said that hypochondriacy are more in autumn and in winter than in the other seasons of the year, in some measure I suppose the effect of an impression made on the mind by a view of the surrounding objects, for the sudden change of the beauties of Spring into the gloomy and desolated show of winter is certainly well calculated to fix the mind with gloom and melancholy thoughts.

After a continuance of this course of things viz. the depression of spirits, the great care of their health, anxiety as to all their concerns, as well as to every sensation, for an indefinite period, diseased perceptions arise in



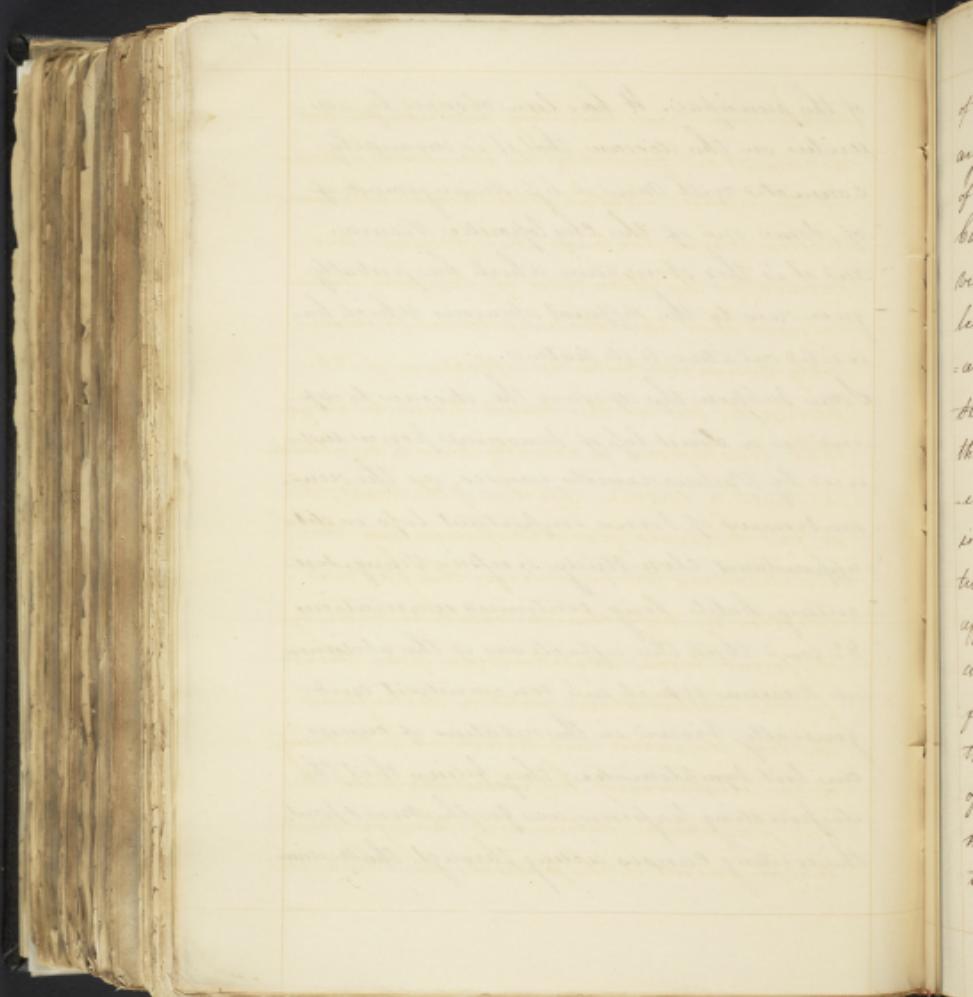
which they form the most unreasonable notions and to which they adhere with the strictest pertinacity; some like the painters described by Tullius supposing themselves made of a fragile substance liable to be broken by the slightest touch, while others like the bakers of Marcus Donatus fear to stand erect lest their legs bend under them; with these and many other notions equally chimerical strongly rooted in their minds they cannot but suffer the greatest anxiety. In others the disease urges on melancholy and in these cases as sometimes meet with suicide.

In hypochondriacs as well as in many other diseases there is much discrepancy of opinion among writers as regards its real nature; but as regards the concrements of their respective views of the pathology of the disease I shall say nothing, and only notice some

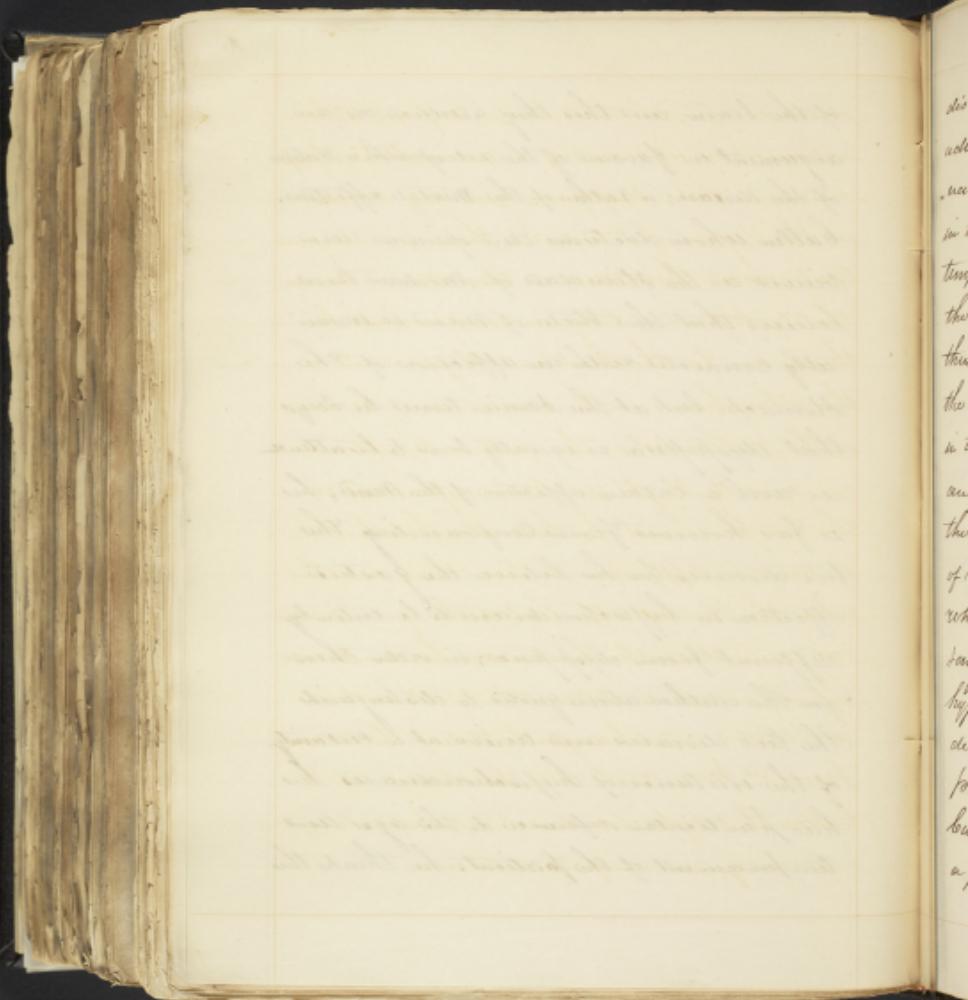


of the principal. It has been observed by all writers on the disease, that it is invariably connected with more or less derangement of some one of the chylopoietic viscera, and it is this observation which has probably given rise to the different opinions which have existed relative to its nature.

Some suppose the disease to depend on a direct loss of sensorial power induced by various remote causes, as the re-enforcement of some important loss or disappointment, close study, excesses of every, &c. &c. and that the affections of the abdominal viscera which are concomitant and generally viewed in the relations of cause and symptomatology; they believe that the predisposing passions are for the most part the exciting causes, acting through the medium



of the brain, and thus they adduce as an argument in favour of the idiopathic nature of the disease; or rather of the mental affection. Cullen, whose doctrines and opinions are viewed as the standard of Modern times, believes that this state of mind is invariably connected with an affection of the Stomach, but at the same time he says that dyspepsia is equally sure to be attended with a certain affection of the Mind; he is far however from confounding the two diseases for he believes the gastric affection in hypochondriasis to be entirely different from dyspepsia; in order then for the author above quoted to distinguish the two diseases and arrive at a certainty of the existence of hypochondriasis he has particular reference to the age and temperament of the patient; he thinks, this



disease almost exclusively confined to those advanced in life and of a Melancholic temperament, while dyspepsia generally occurs in the Vigour of life and to those of a sanguine temperament; these Mental Variations attending the dyspepsia of Sanguine tempers, he thinks, are for the most part slight, and on the other hand in the disease as it occurs in the Melancholic the gastric symptoms are equally slight and more dependent on the temperament; he thinks also that the state of Mind is different in the two cases, and that when the Mental affection of the young and sanguine resembles the disease he would call Hypochondriasis, it must be attributed to a debilitated and changeable state of the Nervous power." In a word it is the opinion of Dr. Cullen that hypochondriasis is perhaps always a primary and idiopathic disease.



Thus he believes that the source of the mental illusion is confined to the abdomen, and that the disagreeable feelings, objections of spirits, distorted perceptions and strange ideas are mainly the offspring of impressions transmitted to the brain from an uneasiness in the stomach and bowels; and this position they support by the well known fact that the disease assumes a much more troublesome type when the patient is troubled with indigestion flatulency, colic, and the like. It is said by Doctor Whistler that the faintings, tumors, palpitations of the heart, and even the yearning which attends the disease may be more frequently owing to the inform state of the prima via than to any defect either in the brain or heart. This evidently appears to be the most plausible doctrine of the nature of this disease yet it must be acknowledged that it is not



easy to trace the numerous perceptions of our hypocondriacal to the original & primitive sensations in the body.

Among the supporters of this opinion concerning the pathology of hypocondriasis viz. that it has its origin in some of the abdominal viscera may be mentioned the name of Brighthorn the author of "An Inquiry into the origin and nature of Mental Distangements." This author in accounting for the progress of the disease from its first symptoms and most simple form, to its full development and most aggravated shape says "A firm belief in any perception never takes place until it acquires a certain degree of force, and as all the impressions which arise from the viscera of the abdomen are necessarily obscure we see the reason why they must continue for a certain length of time or be often repeated

and we have to say much about them  
as to where the remains of the world  
and our own do remain in a state  
of such apparent  
waking power  
as all you suppose and I can  
see no other way to account for  
the remains of the world  
and ours giving us an account of  
the world and the best of it

before they can draw a person's attention from  
the ordinary impressions of external objects  
which are clear and distinct, and before they  
acquire such a degree of vividness as to destroy  
the operations of reason? - That this unhappy  
state of mind denominated hypochondriasis  
is occasioned by some disordered state of  
the abdominal viscera, and most generally  
of the stomach appears to be the popular doc-  
trine of the present day, and in fact a late  
writer has gone so far as to say "that hypo-  
chondriasis is as truly a gastric disease as  
any to which our systems are liable," he also  
goes farther and denies the existence of any  
mental disease whatever as purely idiopathic.  
If then this affection of the mind has its seat  
in the stomach or other of the abdominal  
viscera we are naturally led to enquire into  
the nature of this diseased state of the viscera;



and as we frequently see the Stomach much disordered by indigestion and other diseases, the Mind at the same time being unimpaired, it can only be ascribed to an impulsive Genius.

Causes. Notwithstanding the difference of opinion which has existed as respects the nature of this disease action, almost all agree in ascribing it to the same remote causes, among which as the principal we may mention close study, great anxiety, for the attainment of some important or object, impulsive money, sedentary habits, a constant recollection of some material loss or disappointment, impulsive diet long continued evacuations, to which has been added intermittent and remittent fevers.

To enumerate the proximate cause of the disease would only be to recapitulate the different views that I have before mentioned that different authors have entertained of its



pathology; it is perhaps sufficient to observe that a Majority of physicians from the earliest times have concurred in referring the original seat of hypochondriasis to a primary affection of some one of the abdominal viscera, but of the precise nature of the affection we are as yet ignorant.

**Diagnosis.** In distinguishing this disease we are most liable to confound it with either dyspepsia, hysteria or Melancholia, there being certain symptoms similar, and nearly common to each. To distinguish hypochondriasis from dyspepsia, we may at first have recourse to the age of the patient, as it is said that the former is almost exclusively confined to advanced life, whilst the latter occurs principally from the age of puberty to that of thirty five; the fear of death and constant dread

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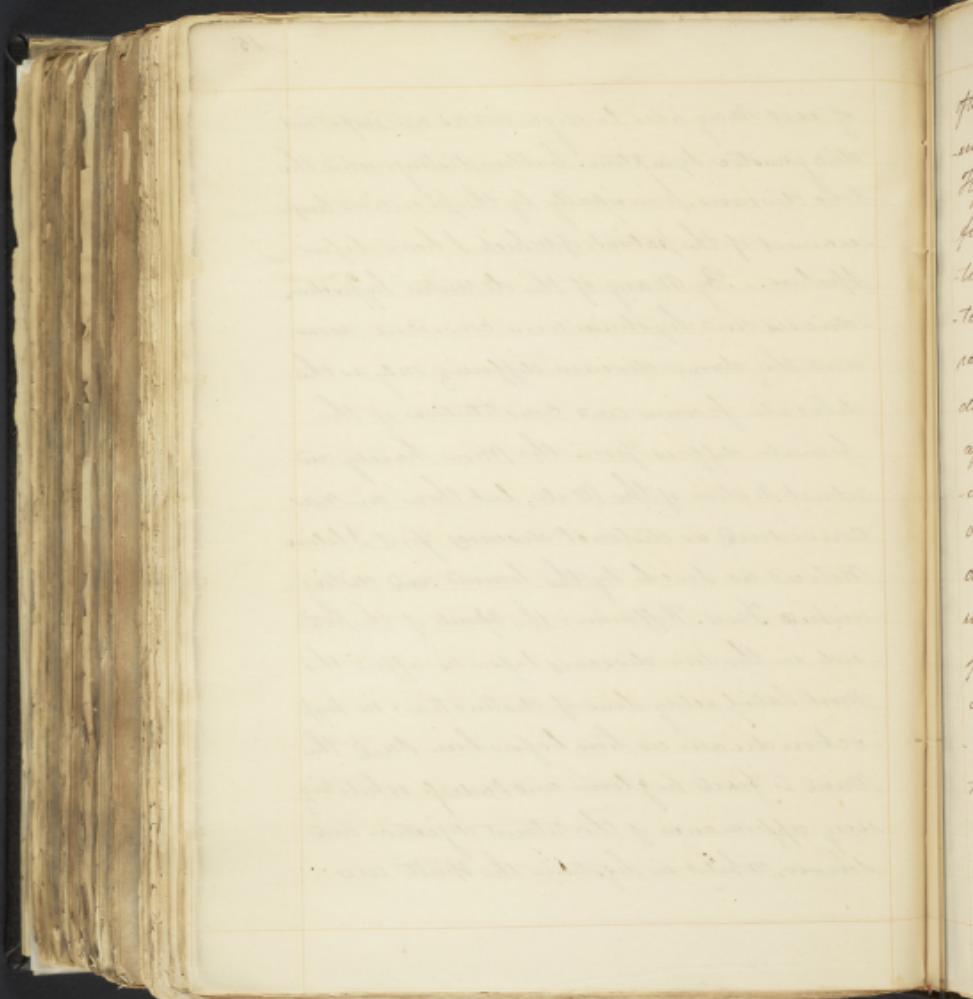
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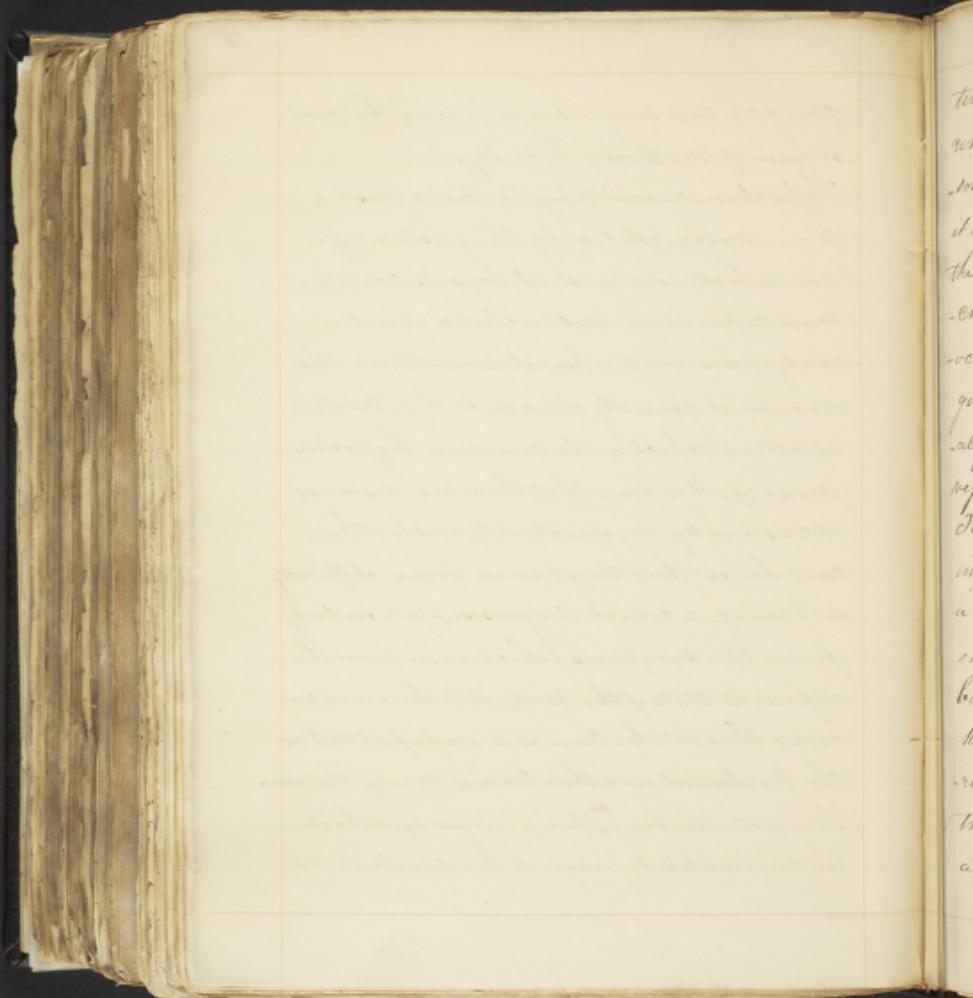
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of evil may also be regarded as an important diagnostic symptom. Cullen distinguished the two diseases, principally by the peculiar temperament of the patient, of which I have before spoken. - By many of the doctors Hypochondriasis and hysteria were considered as one and the same disease, differing only as the delicate frame and constitution of the female differs from the more hasty and robust nature of the Male, but there are now considered as distinct diseases. First I shall notice as such by the learned and distinguished Fred. Hoffman; the spirits of the patients in the two diseases before us afford the most satisfactory line of distinction; in hypochondriasis as has before been said the mind is fixed in gloom and sadness, exhibiting every appearance of the utmost despondence and sorrow, whilst in hysteria the spirits are



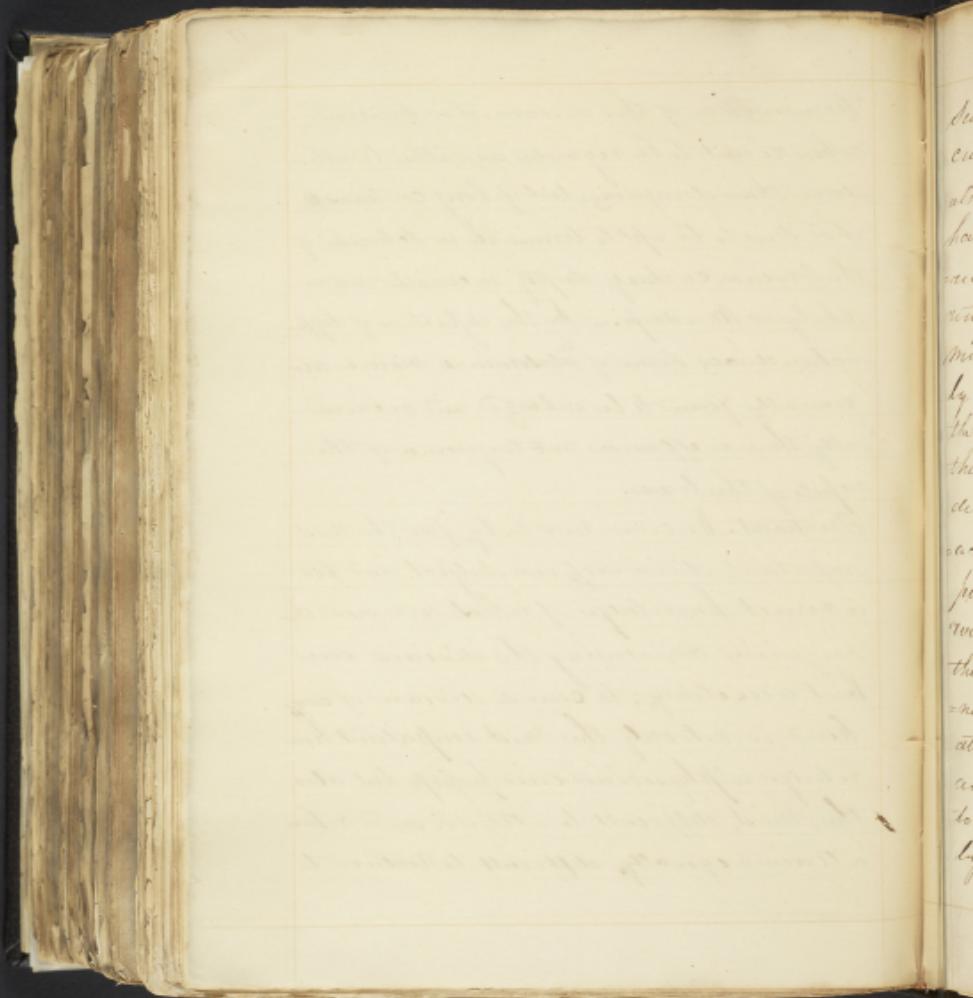
often gay and buoyant, and leaving the countenance of mirth and hilarity.

Hypocondriasis may be distinguished from Melancholia by the gastric affection which is almost always its concomitant, whereas in Melancholia it is but rarely seen, and when it does attend the disease it generally succeeds the mental affection which is the reverse in hypocondriasis. His said that these two diseases occasionally degenerate into each other and hence they must also be distinguished in forming a correct diagnosis, particularly from the symptoms which arise from the depraved state of the mind; it is however conceded that in this case it is unimportant as the treatment in either case is nearly the same. Prognosis. We have no specific signs by which we are enabled to judge of the duration or



termination of this disease; it is however when recent to be regarded as rather troublesome than dangerous, but if long continued it is said to be apt to terminate in Schiriki of the Viscera, cachexy, dropsy, incurable Melancholy or Madness.—In the description of Hypochondriacy some of the abdominal viscera are generally found to be enlarged, and occasionally there is effusion and turgescence of the vessels of the brain.

Treatment. We come now to by far the most important division of our subject, and for a correct knowledge of which all our other enquiries concerning the disease are but auxiliary; to cure a disease of any kind, is not only the most important but requires a physician even perfect but also the most difficult to attain, and when attained equally difficult to lecture to



Successive practice. The indications of  
cure in Hypochondriasis are different from  
almost any other disease so much as we  
have to encounter not only a variety of corpo-  
real disarrangements, but also to contend  
with a most obstinate alteration of the  
Mind; there are the two grand landmarks  
by which we are to direct our practice in  
the cure of this disease. It is evident that as  
this affection is purely a symptomatic  
disease, we have only to recastate the Stom-  
ach in its healthy action, and the erroneous  
perceptions and false ideas of the patient  
will instantly vanish; there is no doubt we  
think but that the affections of the abomi-  
nal viscera claim our first and principal  
attention, but at the same time we think  
as auxiliary in the cure it would be well  
to direct some attention to the Mind, mainly  
by presenting to the patient a variety of new

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and interesting circumstances connected by a natural chain of association. Thus gradually maturing the deranged and morbid concentration of ideas.

To cure any disease we must necessarily first enquire into the remote cause, which when ascertained can either be removed or avoided; in this instance we have before noticed what are considered some of the most common of the remote causes, all of which require prompt removal; Having thus checked the further influence of what we suppose the remote cause of the disease, we are then to endeavor to control those symptoms which arise out of the morbid state of the Stomach and alimentary canal, as well as of the organs lying in their vicinity, and suffering by sympathy in this arrangement; it is few indeed of these symptoms that we meet with a very



striking similarity between this disease  
and dyspepsia. Yet the practice in some res-  
pects is quite different. The Stomach which is  
the organ most generally affected, and which by  
its powerful influence over the neighbouring  
viscera may be productive of many of the  
attending symptoms, first attracts and demands  
our attention. From the slow evacuation of the  
Stomach in this disease we often meet with  
ascidity, and a collection of excretaries in this  
viscera, and as a consequence we have flatulen-  
cy, eructation, heartburn and the like, to remove  
these symptoms, aperients, cathartics and the  
like have generally been given, but more lately  
emetics have been advised, or mercury to a slight  
dilution. The use of emetics in hypochondriasis  
appears to have been noticed by some of the  
older writers, for we find that Chrysostomus  
persisted on the use of such medicines as thoroughly  
cleansed out the Stomach, but repeated vomiting in

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particular, in conclusion he says that these Medicines answer all the purposes which a Mucus of experience and philosophy, and one acquainted with the animal economy can expect in such diseases in their first stages. Of the two opinions whether vomiting be correct or not in this disease we venture to affirm the former, limited however to certain cases; in this disease we believe the Stomach to be far the most part affected, in consequence of a continued irritation of its mucous surface, and if with this state of the Stomach the tongue be dry or found a Mutilated, the epigastrium tender or painful and the skin singularly hot and flushed - emetics by irritating still more the lining Membrane of the Stomach will certainly aggravate the disease, but emetics given in the very commencement of the disease before the symptoms have become so aggravated, with a view to their attenuating effects I think must be useful.

This image shows a single page from an antique handwritten notebook. The page is filled with dense, cursive handwriting in black ink, arranged in approximately ten horizontal rows. The script is fluid and appears to be in English. On the far left, the thick, dark binding of the book is visible, showing the texture of the leather and the edges of the numerous pages within. The paper itself is off-white or light cream, showing significant signs of age, including yellowing and some minor foxing or staining.

Bearing to the intimate connection between the stomach and other portions of the alimentary canal, we often have constipation as an attendant on the disease to a considerable extent, this as it tends to ~~help~~<sup>impair</sup> the function is to be removed by soliciting evacuations daily at stated hours, or by some gentle laxative, or perhaps better by an injection. From the great sympathy between the stomach and liver, the hepatic functions are often performed with great torpor and inactivity in this disease; when this state of the liver does prevail, its removal constitutes an important part in the treatment, in as much as the remedies calculated to remove the dyspeptic symptoms will afford but a very slight alleviation of the symptoms so long as the liver is out of order. To meet this indication the most useful remedy consists in maintaining a gentle operation upon the bowels by means of Mith. Mucuricæ preparation proportioned to the greater or less degree of torpor of the



Alimentary Canal. Having now removed the  
gastric symptoms, reinstated the bowels in their  
healthy action, and restored the healthy func-  
tioning of the liver we think the last half of the  
cure is finished. It has been thought that  
there was actually a loss of tone in the stomach  
in hypochondriasis and that tonics were conse-  
quently a most important class of Medicines in  
its treatment. Cullen with others proscribed the use  
of tonics in this disease, believing that <sup>there</sup> was infe-  
rably not a direct loss of tone, but a want of activity  
only that is to be remedied. According to the notion  
which I have formed relative to the pathology of  
this disease tonics are inadmissible, and in this  
place the following plan of treatment at this  
stage is thought preferable, ~~every~~ thing calculated  
to stimulate the Stomach and bowels is to be avoid-  
ed, and by food light and nutritious enclosure  
to restore the Stomach to its natural healthy  
functional exercise, and as apertant the use



of chalybeate water, tepid bathing, and friction  
of the whole body with coarse flannel cloths  
are strongly recommended.

To conclude, we most sedulously avoid the  
withholding of any strong or mortified stimuli  
from the nervous system, whether they act on the  
exterior senses or the mind; but at the same  
time to insist on the enjoyment of the natural  
stimuli; as to the circulation by exercise; to the  
respiration by pure air of a moderate tempera-  
ture; to the skin by comfortable clothing; to the  
sight by the varied colours of Nature's library; to  
the hearing by the harmony of poetry and song;  
and to the brain or mind by awakening pleasurable  
recollections and holding out the  
 bland allurements of hope. —

Finis.



